



The Dish

# Student demo

## Class of 2014 Gizzi Erskine on cooking for students

Student cooking has outgrown the clichés surrounding it. Students don't just eat jacket potatoes with baked beans, soggy Chinese takeaways and deep-pan microwave pizzas; they want to keep their brain cells on form by eating healthily, and they don't want their only taste of good food to be when they make the occasional trip home to use the washing machine and eat a Sunday roast.

It used to drive me nuts when people suggested that young people didn't cook or have an interest in food. When I was a student, I was fascinated with new ingredients and trying to incorporate them into food. That was 15 years ago; now, with the rise of food blogs, your average student wants to be challenged in the kitchen more than ever.

I spoke to Grace Clarke, a 19-year-old student at Leeds University whose most important possession is her Ottolenghi cookbook, and her university friends Harry and Gee. They're all keen cooks, and they all value eating well. What they wanted to know was how to save money and still eat healthily.

The trick is to use cheaper cuts of meat and to bulk up meals with pulses, such as lentils, and eggs. And use grains like quinoa, barley or spelt, which keep you fuller for longer and give you plenty of vitamins and energy.

Less often used cuts of meat are cheaper and, when cooked slowly with good spicing, taste just as good as the finest fillet steak. And, with some herbs, you can turn a few vegetables and a tin of chickpeas into something just as delicious as you'd find in the souks of North Africa. The great dishes of many countries have had humble starts. People with little money had to be inventive, which is why students are often great cooks. The trick is to think of what you have, then how you can get as much flavour from it as possible. Then you're on to a good start.

Buy the spice blends like ras el hanout, and packets of turmeric and cardamom pods — you'll find these will easily last the student year and will always impart some flavour. Always have fresh herbs on hand: if you have garden space, or just some windows, you can grow a little herb garden. Buy in bulk with your housemates and you'll soon find that store-cupboard ingredients will be the things that turns ordinary dishes into great ones ■

PHOTOGRAPHER: ELENA HEATHERWICK. FOOD STYLIST: ISLA MACKENZIE AT HERSAGENCY.COM; PROP STYLIST: ALEX ORTIZ



### Moroccan meatballs with baked eggs

Mince is the most economical way to eat meat, and it's also pretty versatile. Paired with eggs, it makes a nutritious meal. The North African flavours really make this dish sing.

**SERVES: 2**  
**PREPARATION TIME: 15 MINUTES**  
**COOKING TIME: 40 MINUTES**

- 400g lamb mince
- 2 tbsp cooking oil (anything from vegetable to light olive oil works)
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 3 cloves of garlic, grated
- ½ tsp ras el hanout spice (from bigger supermarkets)
- 1 x 400g can of tomatoes
- 500ml chicken or lamb stock
- 4 eggs
- 25g pack of flat-leaf parsley

- TO SERVE**
- 25g fresh coriander, roughly chopped
  - 25g fresh mint, roughly chopped
  - 150g pot plain yoghurt
  - 4 tbsp harissa (I love rose harissa, but use whatever you can afford)
  - Grilled pitta bread or rice, to serve

1. Place the mince in a large mixing bowl and season with plenty of salt and pepper. Use your hands to break up the meat and mix in the seasoning until it's well combined. Shape into 16 small meatballs.

2. Heat 1 tbsp oil in a heavy-based pan and, when hot, fry the meatballs in batches until brown all over. Set aside on a plate.

3. To make the sauce, heat the remaining oil in the same pan, add the onion and fry gently for 10 minutes. It's important to cook the onions slowly, on a low heat to give the sauce some sweetness. Add the garlic and ras el hanout and cook for another minute. Stir in the tomatoes and cook for five minutes until they have fully broken up. Pour in the stock, mix well and cook gently for 10 minutes. Add the meatballs and cook for another 10 minutes, then stir in the parsley and season with salt and pepper.

4. Make four hollows in the sauce and break an egg into each. Pop the lid on and cook for another 6-8 minutes or until the egg whites have been cooked through but the yolks are still a little runny.

5. Scatter with coriander and mint, and serve straight away with a dollop of yoghurt, a little harissa and the grilled pitta or rice



**TOP TIP**  
To prevent the meatballs from steaming — not frying — they need to be cooked in batches

## Chicken dhansak

Curry is a student favourite. What's great about a dhansak is it takes just a little preparation, then you can leave it to cook while you get on with other things. Chicken thighs are cheaper and tastier than breast and the lentils really bulk this curry out.

**SERVES: 4-6**  
**PREPARATION TIME: 10 MINUTES**  
**COOKING TIME: 1 HOUR 20 MINUTES**

3 tbsp cooking oil
500g boned chicken thighs, diced
1 onion, finely chopped
3cm fresh ginger root, peeled
4 garlic cloves, peeled
1 red chilli, seeds removed
3 green cardamom pods
2 tbsp ground cumin
1½ tbsp ground coriander
½ tbsp ground turmeric
1 tsp chilli powder
1 x 400g can of chopped tomatoes
500ml chicken stock
100g red lentils
1 tbsp brown sugar
1 tbsp white wine vinegar
3 tbsp natural yoghurt
Fresh coriander

**1.** Heat 2 tbsp of oil in a large-lidded, ovenproof casserole pan. Season the chicken thighs then fry in two batches until well browned. Remove from the pan with a slotted spoon and set aside.

**2.** Add the remaining oil to the pan. Add the onion and fry gently for 10 minutes or until it begins to soften, stirring occasionally. Meanwhile, pop the ginger, garlic and chilli into a small food processor or pestle and mortar and pound to a paste.

**3.** Bash the cardamom pods with the end of a rolling pin to split the husks, then remove the seeds and add to the pan with the remaining spices and the aromatics.

**4.** Add the chopped tomatoes, stock, lentils, sugar and vinegar to the pan, then add the chicken. Bring to the boil. Cover and place in the oven to cook for 50 minutes or until tender.

**5.** Stir in the yoghurt, check the seasoning and serve topped with coriander with a bowl of basmati rice.

GIZZI'S  
GADGETS

I CAN'T LIVE  
WITHOUT

CURRYS  
HAND BLENDER



£9.99  
 Much cheaper and easier to store than a Magimix, this is a must for any student cook — you can use it to make sauces, soups, smoothies.



## Beetroot and feta fritters

Beetroot is earthy, healthy and gives an amazing colour to a dish. The flavours in this vegetarian recipe are punchy, and the sweet, spicy chillies give it a little edge.

**SERVES: 4**  
**PREPARATION TIME: 15 MINUTES**  
**COOKING TIME: 10 MINUTES**

200g raw beetroot, coarsely grated (wear gloves to avoid red hands)
200g pack of feta cheese, crumbled
100g gram flour
2 tbsp fresh parsley, chopped
2 tbsp fresh coriander, chopped
1 onion, very finely chopped
1 large egg, beaten
2 tbsp olive oil
3 tbsp of full-fat Greek yoghurt
2 tsp tahini
4 flatbreads
1 tub of hummus
1 little gem lettuce head, chopped
1 tbsp dill, chopped
A handful of pickled chillies, (optional as quite expensive)
1 tbsp hot smoked paprika
Lemon wedges, to serve

**1.** Pat the beetroot dry with kitchen paper. Tip into a bowl and stir in the feta, gram flour, herbs, onion, egg and season well.

**2.** Heat the olive oil in a large pan, add 1-2 tbsp dollops of the mixture and fry the fritters in batches. Cook on each side for 4-5 minutes until firm and golden.

**3.** Mix the yogurt with the tahini and 1 tbsp water, and warm the flatbreads. I do this over a gas flame so they char a little, but it can be done in a toaster.

**4.** Spread the hummus over the warm flatbreads, then add a dollop of the yoghurt, the lettuce, dill and pickled chillies. Top each with three of the hot fritters, squeeze over the lemon juice, sprinkle over the paprika, and serve.

## On the bottle The expensive tipples runneth over

DAMIAN BARR



Your average bottle contains about six civilised glasses (four, if you're pouring on a Friday). By my maths, never better than when slightly tipsy, the glass of red wine I'm holding cost around £141. Not that it's sold by the glass. Not that I'm paying or would ever pay as much. It's worth more than most of the clothes I'm wearing, certainly more than my pants, socks, shirt and tie put together. And I'm dressed quite smartly because there are fewer than 30 bottles of Santa Rita's Casa Real 1989 left in the whole world. Also, this tasting is taking place at The Greenhouse in Mayfair, over which two Michelin stars shine. I've even ironed my shirt.

This is obscene, I tell myself, as I lift the glass. I'm almost determined to find it wanting. Then it hits me. Not literally, because that would be a waste of said shirt, but the bouquet, the nose, the olfactory right-hook. It is damsons swollen to bursting in the late summer sun, it is every jam-jar lid I was never allowed to lick. All this and the glass is not yet near my nose.

Trying not to calculate the cost per sip — you'll find some cheaper, but still rewarding, Chilean alternatives on the right — I take just enough to cover my tongue. Surprisingly, it's not at all syrupy. It's pleasingly-not-puckeringly dry, unmistakably 100% cabernet sauvignon. There is no big cigar hit, no leathery chair. It is almost fresh. Santa Rita only make Casa Real in the finest vintages, and the 1989 was their first. This wine went into this bottle soon after I started high school and only 12,000 were produced. Then it was £9.99. Star sommelier Marc Piquet bagged two of the last for the Greenhouse's extensive and expensive list (more of a *grimoire*). At £850 it's their priciest South American wine but still bargainous in the context of their 1961 Petrus at £29,000.

Suddenly, my glass is empty, having never been so full ■

THREE  
OF THE  
BEST



**SANTA RITA  
CASA REAL 2010**  
 The most recent vintage is less scarce and more affordable than the 1989. Keep it if you can. (£30, *Majestic*)



**CONCHA  
Y TORO'S  
TERRUNYO  
BLOCK LAS  
TERRAZAS  
PIRQUE  
CABERNET  
SAUVIGNON 2010**  
 A boutique bottle from a blockbuster maker. Picked early to preserve fruitiness. (£21, *thewinesociety.com*)



**CARMEN GRAN  
RESERVA  
CABERNET  
SAUVIGNON 2011**  
 Hailing from Maipo Alto, this is concentrated and deep. Will age like Hepburn. (£10.99, *strictlywine.co.uk*)